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SUBJECT: Kandahar Governor Highlights Governance and Development Challenges

REF: A. KABUL 3659
[1](#)B. KABUL 3472

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[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: In a December 12 meeting, Kandahar Governor Weesa briefed Ambassador Wayne on governance and development challenges in his province. Weesa highlighted the need to improve capacity at the district level, strengthen the judicial sector, and improve power generation and distribution to boost development. A friendly and knowledgeable interlocutor, the Governor demonstrated little acumen for working around the huge challenges to governance posed by the Kandahar's tribal, political, and criminal powerbrokers. End Summary.

District Governors Lacking in Qualifications -----

[1](#)2. (SBU) During a December 11-12 US-Canadian joint trip to Kandahar, Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Affairs Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne and Canadian Ambassador to Afghanistan William Crosbie met with officials at Kandahar Air Field (KAF), Forward Operating Base Wilson in Kandahar's Zhari Province, and the Canadian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (KPRT) in Kandahar City. The focus of the two-day visit was governance and development planning in the province, and enhanced coordination between the United States, Canada, and the Afghan Government (GIROA).

[1](#)3. (SBU) Meeting on December 12 at KAF, Kandahar Governor Torkyalai Weesa outlined the challenges he faces in improving governance at the district level, highlighting the severe shortage of qualifications of many district governors. Observing that district governors usually had university degrees and experience in the 1970s, he lamented that tribal affiliations have become the leading factor for selection today, which is also the case with district-level Chiefs of Police. Observing that the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) appoints the district governors while the Ministry of the Interior (MoI) names Chiefs of Police, the Governor complained that this severely limited his ability to influence the selection or termination of these officials.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Governor Weesa highlighted the need to provide governors with budget authority if they are to have the ability to carry out governance responsibilities. Ambassador Wayne noted that discussions in Kabul on a performance-based governance fund were proceeding, with an effort to resolve overlapping interests and authorities between the IDLG and the Ministry of Reconstruction and Rural Development (MRRD). He cited recent discussions with MRRD Minister Zia over a possible way forward which would enable District Development Councils, led by MRRD, to focus on development while the Afghan Social Outreach Program (ASOP) focuses on governance, political, and security issues.

Justice Sector Not Effective

¶5. (SBU) Governor Weesa called the courts and the state attorney's office major problems facing the justice sector in Kandahar. The lead prosecutor for Kandahar was not even a law school graduate, he said, and local residents are unable to obtain decisions or adjudication of disputes from the legal system. Instead they are forced to pay off officials in the justice sector to resolve issues, he stated. The senior judge, for example, maintained his family in Saudi Arabia, which would not be possible on his modest salary. A system of judicial brokers also influences verdicts, he stated.

Energy a Key Impediment to Development

¶6. (SBU) While business in Kandahar City has increased, the lack of electricity is a major impediment to development, Governor Weesa said, observing that some 90 small factories were currently closed due to the lack of power. The two most important challenges were to generate more power from the Kajaki Dam and to guarantee fuel deliveries for diesel-powered electric power plants. The insurgency has complicated increasing the yield of the Kajaki Dam (reftels), while diesel powered plants rely on funds from the Ministry of Economy, which are slow to arrive, which then hold up payments to contractors, who then do not make deliveries until they are paid, he noted. To improve delivery from Kajaki, the Governor recommended upgrades to the distribution system, which is some 90-years old and loses about 40-50 percent of power generated through an aged distribution system. Another way to improve hydroelectric power deliveries was from the Arghandab River, he said, a signature Canadian project.

Comment

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¶7. (SBU) While we hear rumors that Kabul will name a new governor in Kandahar, Governor Weesa gave no indication that he was about to move to a new post or step down. A pleasant interlocutor with an excellent understanding of the major issues facing the province, he has shown little acumen to work around the tribal, political, and criminal groups that block even basic progress on the most important governance, judicial, and development challenges. With coalition security forces about to converge around Kandahar City, we should have new opportunities to seize the initiative on governance and economic development, but Governor Weesa does not seem to be up to navigating these factions and powerbrokers to bring about significant change. The visiting Ambassadors heard an identical assessment of the problems with electric power during a visit to the Kandahar City Power Station, which generates electricity for the city via diesel turbines and operates with USAID funding.

¶8. (U) This message has been coordinated with RC(South).

EIKENBERRY